

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY.

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CAPT. W. H. SMYTH, R.N., President, in the Chair.

John Washington, Esq. Capt. R.N. F.R.S., and Edwin Dunkin, Esq., of the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, were balloted for, and duly elected Fellows of the Society.

The Secretary read the following extract of a letter from the Rev. C. Turnor to the President, accompanying the gift of a valuable astronomical manuscript, concerning which a paper was recently presented to the Society by Mr. Harris :—

“ The favourable opinion you have expressed to me of the merits of the two volumes of *Astronomical MSS.*, written on vellum, in, I think, the fourteenth century, which I purchased of Mr. Thorpe, the London bookseller, induces me to think they might be acceptable to the Royal Astronomical Society; may I, then, request the favour of you to present them, in my name, to that Society? I beg to assure you I shall feel great satisfaction in their being preserved in the library of that Society, which has been instituted for the purpose of advancing the science of Astronomy.”

The following letter from the President to the Secretary was read :—

“ No. 3 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, March 13, 1845.

“ Dear Sir,—As the cabinet-box of which I make mention on page 423, Vol. I., of my *Cycle of Celestial Objects*, contains the original slips from which my work was written, it may, possibly, be a desirable reference at some future day, and, in that view, I beg to present it to the Royal Astronomical Society. It contains the whole results of my measure-department in the working-list order of right ascension, the means having been reduced most carefully by myself, and repeatedly compared with such rigour, that none but the most insignificant error can possibly remain. In addition to what has been printed, these slips contain the diagrams and quadrants of each object, to the absence of which all the graver double-star mistakes which I have yet encountered are directly imputable. There are also a few unprinted remarks relative to the identity, &c., of the objects.

“ It was intended that this cabinet should remain at Hartwell

House, together with the polar axis and the Bedford manuscripts, but Dr. Lee has kindly consented to this transfer. Previously, however, to its removal, a most careful scrutiny has been instituted of the slips and other papers with the printed *Cycle*, and various typographical errors have been detected in consequence. Some printed lists of these are herewith forwarded for any Fellows of the Society who may possess a copy of the work.—I have the honour to be, &c.

“ W. H. SMYTH.

“ *Rev. R. Main.*”

The following communications were read :—

I. Copy of a Letter from Professor Fuss, Perpetual Secretary of the Imperial Academy of Sciences at St. Petersburg, to the Baron Berzelius, Perpetual Secretary of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Stockholm, on the contemplated extension of the Swedish Arc of Meridian, from its northern extremity at Pahtawara to the North Cape ; with a Letter from Capt. Sir John Ross, R.N., to Dr. Lee. Communicated by Dr. Lee.

II. A Letter from the Rev. S. J. Rigaud to the Secretary, on the Character of Halley.

“ *January 9, 1845.*

“ Dear Sir,—In addition to the arguments which I have employed in defence of Halley, in the tract which I did myself the honour to present to the Astronomical Society, I wish to mention the following facts :—

“ 1st. I have evidence to shew that Halley was supposed at one time to be an aspirant to the office of precentor in a cathedral, I think that of Chichester, but I have not the memorandum by me in London. He was not in orders, so that this is clearly a mistake ; but it is inconceivable that a man of known infidel views could have been seriously mentioned as a candidate for ecclesiastical duties.

“ 2d. The following passage appears in the correspondence of Sir Thomas Browne, the learned and excellent author of the *Religio Medici*, vol. I. p. 224 :—

“ ‘ Hee (*i. e.* Halley) came to church constantly, the parish church, which was St. Aldate’s, commonly called St. Fowl’s, and whither the scollars of Pembroke college also went, and had one isle for themselves. Hee was a very good and plaine-dealing man, and had read Euclide and Ptolemie very accurately, and also Aristotle, whereof we should often discourse, and I cannot but remember him with some content.’

“ The name of the Saint *Fowl’s* is probably a mistake in transcribing or printing from the original MS. for *Towl’s*, the ordinary pronunciation of the name being *St. Olls*.

“ I consider this extract of great value ; not only does it give the direct testimony of Sir T. Browne to regular habits of religious observance in Halley, but it bears remarkably on another point. It has been usual to trace Halley’s supposed scepticism to an exclusive